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Muratti defends CIA's right to carry out covert activities

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MARQUETTE — The CIA's covert activity in Nicaragua is morally, but not legally wrong, a member of the U.S. Army War College said Tuesday at Northern Michigan University.

"Some activities I can't agree with, but I support the ability of the U.S. to carry out covert activities if needed for national defense," said Lt. Col. Jose A. Muratti, field artillery representative for the group.

Members of the panel are students at the U.S. Army War College in Carlisle, Pa., and gave their personal views on military issues as part of a panel discussion.

Members include: Lt. Col. Louis M. Jackson, chemical corps; Lt. Col. James H.P. Kelsey, military intelligence; Lt. Col. Dennis P. McGuirk, U.S. Air Force; Muratti; and Col. David Hansen, air defense artillery. Hansen, a member of the Department of National Security, served as moderator.

The War College is the Army's senior educational institution. U.S. military policy-making process is reviewed and studied at the college. Hansen said the panel was established about 15 years ago to encourage dialogue with college students and faculty members about national security policy formulation. This year's panel will visit 38 college campuses.

The panelists are experts in a variety of fields and Muratti, who is an expert on U.S. policy in Latin America and

served in Washington during both the Reagan and Carter administrations, fielded the majority of questions from the audience.

When asked about differences in policy-making by Carter administration compared to Reagan's, Muratti said, "Carter relied a lot on one man, Zbigniew Brzezinski (Carter's national security adviser). His national security staff wasn't as large. He relied more on fewer people."

In contrast, "Reagan has more direct contact with national security staff and relies on a network of secretaries, mainly in the departments of defense, state and the National Security Council and Central Intelligence Agency, and their under-secretaries," Muratti said.

Several questions were also directed toward Muratti dealing with U.S. military policy in Central America. The focus of many of the questions was Nicaragua.

He added that the Reagan administration has a weak case against Nicaragua, but that it will hold up because Nicaragua has been the aggressor against El Salvador. "Patrols from Nicaragua have been stopped passing through Honduras with weapons and maps of El Salvador," Muratti said. "Aerial photos of arms shipments have also been taken."

Other questions branched into the Middle East and U.S. Soviet relations. Kelsey, an expert on those two topics, answered the questions.

What about the Iran-Iraq War? "Unfortunately, it will go on until Iran wins. As long as Khomeini is in power anyway," Kelsey said. "Iran has lost more soldiers already than the U.S. did

in World War II and how long Iraq can hold on is the question."

How loyal are Warsaw Pact countries to Russia and are NATO conventional forces strong enough?

"I would be scared to go to war with Warsaw Pact countries. I think they would like to go against Russia and take a little bite out of their power," Kelsey said. "We rely on nuclear deterrent to make up for our shortfalls. We can't match Warsaw Pact force with our conventional force."

He added that he didn't think there would be a confrontation between the U.S. and Russia because the survivability of Russia is questionable and the Soviets fear the consequences of a Superpower war.

Muratti and Kelsey disagreed on the answer on one question asked. If the U.S. eased up on Castro could he be an asset to us?

"Castro is mellowing a bit. He knows Angola isn't good for his people and I don't think he likes Cuba's growing dependency on the Soviet Union. We have been making little deals with him, but it will take a little while (for any major deals)," Muratti said.

Kelsey countered by saying, "I don't think Russia will let that happen (better relations with U.S.). Cuba is a landmark for Russia and a foothold in America. They can change leadership and maintain control."

Hansen stressed the point that comments made by panel members are their own opinions which they have developed from studying military policy in the U.S. Their remarks do not reflect the ideas of the armed forces or the War College. Hansen said.



These five military veterans, from left, Lt. Col. Dennis P. McGuirk, Lt. Col. Jose A. Muratti, Col. David G. Hansen, Lt. Col. Louis M. Jackson and Lt. Col. James H. P. Kelsey, enlightened a crowd of about 100 people Tues-

day night on U.S. military policy. The group is from the U.S. Army War College and members have served at least 18 years each in the military. Students at the War College review and study the national security policy formula-

tion process. The War College students were on the campus of Northern Michigan University as part of a tour in which 38 colleges will be visited. (Journal photo by Dave Schneider)